

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9311

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

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USLO PEKING

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USIA WASHDC

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CINCUNC SEOUL KOREA

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN MOPS KS KN US

SUBJ: ROK MEDIA HANDLING OF PANMUNJOM SETTLEMENT

REF: (A) STATE 206131 (DTG 190517Z AUG 76)

(B) SEOUL 6877 (DTG 010345Z SEP 76)

SUMMARY: ROK NEWSPAPERS ON SEPTEMBER 7 GAVE WHAT SEEMS TO BE FINAL COVERAGE TO PANMUNJOM INCIDENT, ACCEPTING AGREEMENT AS FINAL STEP OF SETTLEMENT. PAPERS' FEATURE ARTICLES VOICED DOUBTS ABOUT FUTURE. ONLY ONE EDITORIAL APPEARED. END SUMMARY.

1. ON SEPTEMBER 7, KOREAN PRESS GAVE FRONT-PAGE (AND MOSTLY HEADLINE) TREATMENT TO SEPTEMBER 6 SIGNATURE OF SECRETARIES' AGREEMENT TO DIVIDE JSA (JOINT SECURITY AREA) AT PANMUNJOM.

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PAPERS TYPICALLY MENTIONED ROK-US JOINT ANNOUNCEMENT MADE SAME

DAY SIMULTANEOUSLY IN SEOUL AND WASHINGTON IN ADDITION TO LEAD STORIES ON SIGNATURE AND EXCHANGE OF AGREEMENT. MOST PAPERS RAN FRONT-PAGE PHOTOGRAPH OF EXCHANGE OF AGREEMENT DOCUMENTS.

2. ALL PAPERS RAN FEATURE ARTICLES ON THIRD PAGE, AND SEVERAL PAPERS GAVE FULL TEXT OF AGREEMENT. CHUNG-ANG ILBO WAS ONLY PAPER TO RUN EDITORIAL ON SUBJECT.

3. FEATURE ARTICLES AND EDITORIAL ALIKE MARK CLOSING OF 8/18 PANMUNJOM INCIDENT WITH COMMENTARY ON IMPLICATIONS OF AGREEMENT AND WAY IN WHICH IT WAS REACHED. CHUNG-ANG ILBO EDITORIAL FOUND MEANING IN POINT THAT NORTH KOREA (NK) AND UN COMMAND (UNC) HAD REACHED AGREEMENT THROUGH DISCUSSIONS, DESPITE ALMOST COMPLETE LACK OF MUTUAL TRUST. ATTRIBUTING THIS SUCCESS TO SUPERIOR UNC STRENGTH, WRITERS CONCLUDED THAT REAL PROBLEM IS ONLY BEGINNING; NEW ARRANGEMENTS MAY LEAD TO WORSENERD SITUATION AT PANMUNJOM UNLESS UNC SIDE KEEPS INITIATIVE BY MAINTAINING ROK-US DEFENSE POSTURE STRONGER THAN NK'S.

4. FEATURE ARTICLES, TOO, EXAMINED GAINS AND LOSSES. AS A TYPICAL EXAMPLE, TONG-A ILBO, CITING MILITARY EXPERTS, POINTED OUT ADVANTAGES TO UNC SIDE: NK CANNOT USE BRIDGE OF NO RETURN AND MUST REMOVE ITS FOUR SOUTHERN GUARD POSTS, SEPARATION OF GUARDS MAY PREVENT CLASHES, AND JOINT OBSERVER TEAMS HAVE BEEN REVIVED. AS PROBLEMATICAL POINTS, ARTICLE LISTED QUESTION OF WHETHER FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT WOULD ACTUALLY BE REALIZED, DANGER OF KIDNAPPINGS BY NK, AND POSSIBILITY OF EVEN LARGER NK PROVOCATIONS IN FUTURE, IF THEY DIG TUNNELS OR INTRODUCE LARGE QUANTITIES OF AMMUNITION AND HEAVY WEAPONS INTO JSA.

5. EMBASSY COMMENT: TONE OF ARTICLES SEEMS TO BE ONE OF GRUDGING ACCEPTANCE OF AGREEMENT AS MARKING END OF PANMUNJOM INCIDENT. NEWSPAPERS REFLECT PRONOUNCED RESERVATIONS REGARDING SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENT, HOWEVER. END COMMENT.
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